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Letter dated 22 February 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I would like to refer to the letter dated 18 February 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon addressed to you.

The Permanent Representative of Lebanon deliberately misrepresents the facts on the ground by claiming that Israel "expanded" the security zone by placing barbed wire on the outskirts of the village of Arnoun. In fact, the village has long been part of the security zone, which, it should be noted, Israel has been compelled to maintain in response to the continued terrorist attacks emanating from Lebanon. Nevertheless, the village was being exploited by Hizbollah as a forward staging area for terrorist attacks against Israel in complete violation of the 1996 understandings reached under the auspices of the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Warren Christopher. For example, the village was utilized for storing weapons and ammunition that Hizbollah smuggled into the area. Only in response to these illegal activities did Israel place the barbed wire on the outskirts of the village, as an additional measure of self-defence.

Once again, the allegations levelled incessantly by the Government of Lebanon serve only to obfuscate the actual situation in the region, which is a direct result of its own express policies. By allowing and even encouraging terrorist activity from its territory, Lebanon is directly responsible for the conflict, including the continued suffering of civilians on both sides of the border. Lebanon has a clear duty in international law and under the Charter of the United Nations not to allow its territory to be a base for attacks on Israel, to disarm these groups and to cease all aid and encouragement to them.

There should, moreover, be no illusions about the terrorist activity that Lebanon openly praises as a purported "resistance". The Secretary-General of the Hizbollah recently reiterated the goal of this "resistance", namely that "Palestine, all of Palestine, should be returned to the Palestinian people and to the Arab nation" (Radio Nur, 16 February 1999). When the Lebanese Prime Minister publicly praises this "resistance" (Associated Press, 14 February 1999), it should be understood just what sort of "resistance" he is supporting: resistance by means of terror to the very existence of the State of Israel. That, in essence, means supporting an ideology that negates a United Nations member's right to exist.

Israel has repeatedly expressed its willingness to implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which was adopted under Chapter VI of the Charter, in its entirely. Chapter VI specifically calls on the parties to any dispute to first seek a solution by negotiation. Resolution 425 (1978) not only calls for the withdrawal of Israeli forces, but also for the restoration of international peace and security and the return of the effective authority of the Lebanese Government in the area. The declared willingness of the Lebanese Government to allow terrorist activities from its territory against a neighbouring country is totally incompatible with the last two provisions of the resolution. Israel calls upon the Government of Lebanon to cooperate with Israel in order to restore peace and security along our common border. Until that time, Israel reserves the right to act in its own self-defence in accordance with international law.

I should be grateful if you will have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 155 entitled "Measures to eliminate international terrorism", and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ambassador Dore GOLD
Permanent Representative